

# Thoughts Aren't Facts

## Find shades of gray

When we change our words, we change our thoughts. When we change our thoughts, we change our lives.

- 1. Sometimes our thoughts make things worse than they actually are. Our thoughts can create “our reality” - but this may not be REALITY.**
  - If a teen is late for curfew – you assume there’s been an accident
  - If you’re scared of the dark – you react in fear (adrenaline)
  - If someone whispers to another person, when you enter a room – you assume it’s about you.
- 2. Thoughts develop a life of their own!**
  - Although thoughts are only in our minds, they can be very powerful – they affect how we feel and what we do. Our thought patterns dictate the ways we perceive and explain reality and influence our behavior.
- 3. Being aware of our thoughts as something separate from what is actually happening can help us deal with them and the tough situations creating the thoughts.**
- 4. The following are four negative patterns that increase production of stress hormones and may cause mental and physical damage.**

### **Unrealistic expectations**

- Being a perfectionist – holding high expectations for self and others.
  - If life doesn’t meet expectations, we may push ourselves harder, despite signs telling us to stop or do something different
- Taking on too much. Can’t do it all.
  - Constant doing because relaxation doesn’t feel deserved.
- Common thoughts like: “I should...I must...I have too...I need to...I always...Absolutely... You have too...”
- Thoughts filled with criticism and judgement towards self and others.
- Thoughts filled with worry, fear, frustration, self-hatred or guilt.
- Can’ts excuse you from possible failure –avoid failure, then stay in control

## **Jumping to conclusions**

Tricks you into thinking if you can figure out what is going to happen, you can prepare for it.

- Reading emails at night –late to bed then tired the next day.
- Assuming the worst
- Assuming others are thinking badly of them or assuming they know something will turn out badly. Making up mental scenarios of negative situations that could occur.
- Leads to feelings of anxiety, worry, fear, sadness and defeat.
- Thoughts blow things out of proportion quickly.
  - Making a mountain out of a molehill.
- We tend to overgeneralize and see negatives as patterns of defeat.
- Emotionally reasoning based on nothing but strong feelings.

## **Taking it personally**

Nothing other people do is about you – it's because of themselves.

- “Everything is about me” – assumes that whatever is going wrong is your own fault or is aimed at self in some way.
- Blame self for things not responsible for.
  - “Everything bad happens to me.”
  - “Why me?”
  - “I always have bad luck.”
  - “Yes, but” – side-step responsibility, get control.
- Associated with feeling angry, hopeless, defeated and guilty.

## **Thoughts don't equal facts**

- Thinking lets your emotions convince you that what you are thinking is fact and then begin to judge yourself.
  - “Why didn't I figure that out. I'm so dumb.”
  - “I'm sad so I must be depressed.”
  - “I don't want to work on this right now so I must be a slacker.”
- Leads to feelings of hopelessness and sadness.
- Become aware of how you let your thoughts become reality without exploring different perspectives.

## **5. What is self-talk?**

- We see what we are looking for.